



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

NOV 7 2003

Indian Health Service
California Area Office
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 7-100
Sacramento, California 95814-4708

Dear Program Director:

The month of October marked the beginning of the annual California Area Indian Health Vaccine Awareness Campaign. We hope that you are well on your way towards providing influenza (flu) vaccine coverage for all appropriate patients in your service population. If not, there is still time to make this a primary focus for your health program. Flu vaccine is the best way to prevent severe complications associated with the flu virus. Everyone must be **re-vaccinated each year** because the flu viruses change each year. Adequate supplies of the flu vaccine are available this year so we encourage you to identify and immunize all American Indian patients who are in need of this vaccine.


We are especially concerned with the elder population. As reported in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) of October 10, 2003, **"influenza and pneumococcal diseases are key causes of mortality among persons aged >65 years, accounting for approximately 36,000 and 3,400 deaths per year, respectively, during 1990—1999"**. As you know, this age group is part of the Indian Health Service (IHS) GPRA clinical performance indicator set that will be measured in 2004. By immunizing this group of individuals now, you will assist in keeping your service population healthy as well as improve your 2004 GPRA results. When these patients are seen for their flu shots, we ask that you also screen them to determine if they need the pneumococcal vaccine. In this way you can accomplish both of these goals during one visit.

In addition to the elderly population, the following groups that should be considered for the flu vaccine:

- Everyone 50 years of age and older
- Anyone between the ages of 6 months and 64 years of age with a chronic medical condition; diabetes, hypertension, anemia, asthma, lung disease, kidney disease, heart disease, and weakened immune system
- Pregnant women who are past their 3rd month of pregnancy/those in their second trimester during flu season
- Health care personnel coming in close contact with people at risk of serious influenza
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- Healthy children 6–23 months of age along with their household contacts and caregivers when feasible.

You may also obtain influenza information and updates from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website: <http://www.cdc.gov/nip>. If additional information or assistance is needed with this campaign please contact Susan Ducore, RN, MSN at the California Area Office. Thank you for your time and cooperation with the vaccine awareness campaign.

Sincerely yours,


Stephen J. Mader, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer